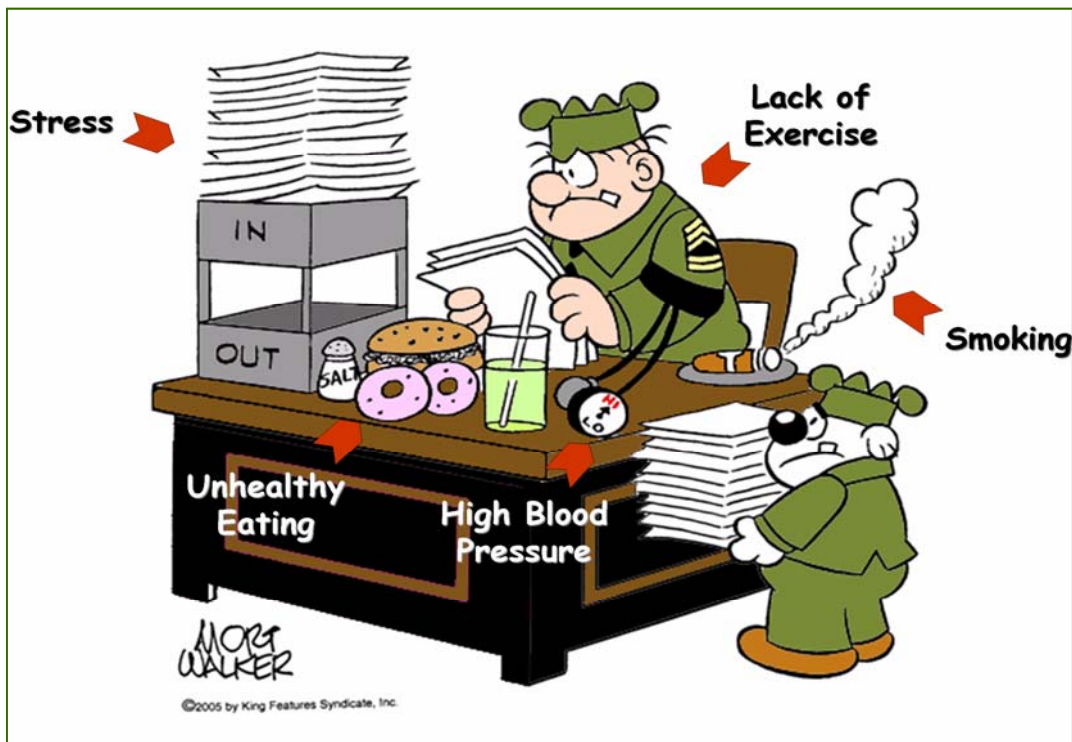


VA Stroke QUERI Circular

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Stroke Awareness Campaign.....



Upcoming Conferences

October 21-24, 2005, 27th Annual Meeting of the Society for Medical Decision Making Translating Medical Research into Practice, San Francisco, CA <http://www.smdm.org/AnnualMeeting.html>

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Disseminating Stroke Prevention Materials to Veterans: The Development of a Direct to Consumer (DTC) Implementation Strategy, Principal Investigator: Rebecca J. Beyth, MD.

Do you have high blood pressure? Are you sedentary? These are some of the identified stroke risk factors. Research suggests that successful management of stroke risk factors can reduce the likelihood of experiencing a first or recurrent stroke. Unfortunately, stroke risk factors are often unmanaged as providers are consumed with managing a multitude of medical conditions during the medical visit. Thus, to implement change, implementation efforts aimed at the consumer (veterans) may prompt changes in provider behavior to assist the patient with stroke risk reduction.

This project is a pre-implementation pilot effort to design and develop a DTC strategy among veterans for primary and secondary stroke prevention. As the consumers of their healthcare, veterans need to be engaged as active participants in their healthcare. The first step in this process is for them to become knowledgeable and aware of modifiable risk factors for stroke prevention. While there are many mediums available to convey information to patients, it remains unclear what format can provide prevention materials

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New Locally Initiated Projects (LIPs)

In May 2005, the Stroke QUERI received supplemental core funding from VA HSR&D for three LIPs:

1. Home Based Tele-Health Stroke Care: Validation of evidence-based disease dialogues, Principal Investigator: Neale Chumbler, PhD.

Home-telehealth (where the patient is at his or her own residence and there is direct communication between the patient and clinician located outside the residence) offers the potential to provide a potentially cost-effective method to enhance both in-home rehabilitation and post-stroke disease management. One of several modalities (e.g., an in-home messaging device) may be used for communication.

The purpose of this project is to collect pilot information that supports the development and initial testing of the VA care coordination/home-telehealth (CC/HT) of disease management dialogues for veterans with stroke. This project will advance an ongoing program of study that is exploring the extent to which tele-care coordination (TCC) interventions are associated with reduced health service utilization for veterans with diabetes and heart failure, two very common conditions that stroke patients have to effectively manage in their post-acute, home-based care.

2. Pilot Project: Informal Caregivers of Veterans Post Stroke, Principal Investigator: Maude Rittman, PhD.

As noted in a recent report (Visser-Meily et al., 2005), comprehensive assessments of caregiver needs are required and should be the critical first step prior to the development of intervention studies. In particular, the problems facing caregivers of veterans following a stroke are unique from caregivers of other chronic illnesses. It is important to directly learn from caregivers themselves the critical domains of experiences that need to be addressed in a survey so that interventions can be tailored to these needs in order to improve outcomes for the caregivers and the veterans.

The goal of this pilot study is to develop a survey of informal caregivers of veteran patients who have had a stroke.

The specific objectives of the pilot study are:

- Use qualitative data obtained from focus groups and existing stroke caregiver literature to identify important domains of caregiver experiences and needs to be addressed in a national caregiver survey.
- Develop a survey questionnaire that reflects these caregiver domains and needs and/or integrates information from existing caregiver instruments and caregiver literature.
- Obtain feedback from one additional focus group of stroke caregivers on the survey questions and to refine the survey questionnaire.
- Based on information from focus groups, refine the conceptual framework for the future study.

VA Stroke Performance Measurement Plans for FY06

Barbara Sigford, MD, National Program Director and Clifford Marshall, MS, Rehabilitation Planning Specialist with VA Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service (PM&RS) met recently with the Performance Measurement Workgroup (PMWG) of VA Central Office to discuss the status of the current VISN Director performance measure and any other potential rehabilitation measures that the workgroup might be interested in establishing. One item of interest that was presented included monitoring the percentage of stroke, brain injury, and amputation patients who are admitted to formal inpatient rehabilitation bed units. Evidence continues to surface in the literature that supports the position that certain strokes (FRGs 4 – 7), traumatic brain injury, and lower extremity amputation patients have better outcomes if they are admitted to an inpatient rehabilitation unit. A review of the FY04 VA data indicated that only 18.6% of these patients actually have a history of such an inpatient rehabilitation stay. Based on this information the workgroup recommended that a Supporting Indicator be established that will be included with the Network Directors Performance Plan to monitor these percentages throughout FY06.

In late August, the PM&RS program office is planning to hold a number of national conference calls to share with everyone the methods they will use to monitor this new supporting indicator. Dean Reker, PhD, Lead for the Stroke QUERI Methodology Core will continue to collaborate with PM&RS with the development of this new support indicator. While a supporting indicator does not carry the weight of a full performance measure, quarterly reports similar to those that are currently generated for the existing performance measure will be produced to monitor the results of the new supporting indicator.

Stroke awareness campaign.....

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most efficiently, i.e., to the largest audience with the minimal cost.

Specific aims:

- To refine current evidence-based consumer materials about hypertension for primary and secondary stroke prevention for veterans,
- To determine the most effective targeted marketing strategy for implementation of stroke prevention materials to veterans, and
- To test the feasibility of our targeted marketing strategy for implementation of stroke prevention materials among veterans at selected sites in VISNs 8 and 11.

We plan to place an "Are you at risk for stroke?" poster in the VAMC Primary Care, Neurology, Rehabilitation and Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) waiting areas in VISNs 8 and 11 for a 30-day time period. The poster will be a DTC marketing campaign to motivate veterans to find out more about stroke risk factors and stroke prevention. After brainstorming about who would be a good "messenger" to spread the word, our research team decided that we needed one very recognizable soldier - not Beetle Bailey, but Sarge! Sarge is the perfect "poster soldier" for our stroke awareness and prevention campaign because he is known to veterans of different ages, and he is a bit overweight, which can lead to two of the top risk factors for stroke: high blood pressure and diabetes. Mort Walker, creator of the comic strip Beetle Bailey and a veteran who was drafted into the Army in 1943, has agreed to donate a rendering of "Sarge" as the "famous face" to capture the veterans' attention and to assist us in getting out the stroke awareness/prevention message.

Characteristics of Veteran Stroke Survivors

The Department of Veterans Affairs periodically conducts surveys of the US veteran population. The latest of these surveys, the National Survey of Veterans 2001 (NSV 2001), became available in July 2003 as a SAS database at the Austin Automation Center. While we know a considerable amount of information about veterans with stroke who use the VHA for health care, little is known about veterans who receive health care outside our system. The NSV 2001 is a comprehensive national survey that contains detailed information on veterans' socio-demographics, military experience, health status, health insurance and utilization patterns, and disability compensation, pension, and other VA benefit use. Of particular interest, veterans who indicated they received services for stroke in the past year are included in this database. The survey provides an opportunity to learn more about the numbers and characteristics of stroke survivors in the general, non-institutionalized veteran population.

A few highlights to date include:

- ◆ There are an estimated 762,447 veterans who report receiving health care services for stroke-related problems during the one year preceding the survey. This number represents about 3% of the total veteran population of approximately 25 million.

- ◆ Twenty-nine percent (29%) of stroke survivors in the veteran population are under the age of 65, about one-third (33%) are between the ages of 65 - 74, 35% are aged 75 - 84, and about 3% are aged 85 or older.
- ◆ The majority of veteran stroke survivors are married (73%), 12% are divorced or separated, 11% are widowed and 4% never married.
- ◆ Eighty-two percent (82%) reported that they are not working and are not looking for work, about two-thirds cite the reason as being retired (64%), and one-third (33%) report being disabled as the reason.
- ◆ Two-thirds of stroke survivors report their health as fair (31%) or poor (35%).
- ◆ Most veteran stroke survivors are covered by Medicare (77%); 11.5% are covered by Medicaid; 5% are covered by Tri-Care; and 45% have some type of private health insurance.

Further analyses will be conducted comparing the characteristics of veteran stroke survivors who use VA health care services compared to those who use non-VA services and/or a combination of VA and non-VA services (multiple system users). For more information, contact Diane Cowper, PhD., Assistant Director, RORC at (353) 376-1611 x 4922 (phone) or by e-mail at: Diane.Cowper2@med.va.gov.

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"Implementation of Research into Clinical Practice"



VA Stroke QUERI Mission Statement

The mission of the Stroke QUERI is to reduce stroke risk and maximize the functional status and quality of life of veterans with stroke by systematically implementing clinical research findings and evidence-based guidelines into routine clinical practice.

The Stroke QUERI has assembled an excellent team of national leaders and research investigators with the intention of continually developing collaborations with other institutions and investigators centered on the VA stroke population to further expand implementation efforts.

Announcements.....

•Stroke QUERI Clinical Coordinator, Linda Williams, MD, has accepted the position of Chief of Neurology at the Richard L. Roudebush VAMC, Indianapolis, IN, effective July 1, 2005.

•Stroke QUERI Research Coordinator Pamela W. Duncan, PhD, FAPTA, has accepted an invitation to serve on the American Heart Association, Stroke Council's Leadership Committee as the Vice-Chairperson. Dr. Duncan will serve a two year term beginning July 1, 2005 and ending on June 30, 2007.

The Stroke Council is one of thirteen scientific councils within the larger umbrella of the American Heart Association. Its mission is to promote and support excellence in stroke research and education and to achieve the objectives of the American Stroke Association in stroke research, treatment and prevention. The American Stroke Association is a division of the American Heart Association.

American Heart Association Stroke Council members participate in a variety of activities at the national and local affiliate levels to support the association's mission "to reduce disability and death from cardiovascular diseases and stroke." Dr. Duncan's appointment to this committee as the Vice-chairperson has two "firsts": she is the first non-MD to hold this office and the first woman nominated and invited to the post. As Vice-Chairperson, she will also serve as the Chair of the Budget Committee.

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